

and 10,000 new Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents.

"A wall is the single most expensive thing you can do in terms of trying to secure the border, and not necessarily the most effective on its own," said Doris Meissner, who was the top immigration official during the Clinton administration. "If you want to be strategic about it, you want to invest in technologies and programs that can stop threats well before they can actually get to the border."

Mr. SCHUMER. I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

### TAX REFORM

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, just over 2 weeks ago, President Trump signed a historic tax reform bill into law. Some, not really knowing what was in the bill and people who were determined to find fault with it, were let's just say a little skeptical at first. They wondered what this whole thing was about and who would actually benefit. But now the verdict is starting to come in. Many folks are pleasantly surprised, for the first time in a while, knowing that Congress and Washington, DC, actually have produced something that will make their lives better. They are appreciative because they are seeing the immediate consequences. In response, more than 100 companies have announced they will give wage increases, they will increase their charitable contributions, and they will give bonuses to their employees. One million Americans are receiving money they previously didn't have, thanks to passage of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act.

But it is not just about bonuses, of course. We expect that once the IRS updates its withholding tables, wages will rise, too, take-home pay will go up, and hopefully people will see that in their paychecks in February. As my colleague the junior Senator from Ohio wrote last week, "With this tax reform, the proof will be in your paycheck." Families can spend that extra money any way they wish, of course. That is the point. They can spend it on projects long delayed. They can spend it on their kids. They can give it as an allowance or some modest compensation for chores performed or apply it to their kids' future education, or people may just figure out they want to save for a rainy day. The number is pretty shocking as far as how many Americans are living paycheck to paycheck and cannot sustain a \$400 loss in income and make things work for them. So this will provide them, if they wish, a little bit of cushion for a rainy day. They can donate it to their house of

worship. They can help a neighbor or a friend who has fallen on hard times.

In some places, we are learning that families will enjoy lower utility rates based on what gas and electric companies are doing for their residential customers in light of their new tax savings. In places such as Michigan, Montana, Minnesota, Kansas, Kentucky, South Dakota, and Arizona, the utility regulators in those States are looking at the tax reduction of those investor-owned utilities and how that will calculate into the rate of return that they are guaranteed under the law. But it looks to me as if it will be good news for consumers, that lower heating bills will be the result during the chilly times of the year and lower air-conditioning costs and other electricity costs when spring and summer come around. So it is encouraging to see this sort of perhaps unexpected consequence of tax reform but one that will directly benefit consumers.

This is real, it is significant, and it is like priming our economic pump—a little push here and a pull there because of tax reform, and all of a sudden, the entire engine of the American economy is chugging along and will soon be running at full speed.

In Texas, you can hear the economy humming along healthily, and we should listen. We should listen to the voices of the job creators like one in New Braunfels, which is between Austin and San Antonio. It is called Rush Enterprises. Rush Enterprises specializes in commercial vehicles. It reported last month that it planned to give each of its 6,600 employees a \$1,000 bonus after President Trump signed the tax reform into law—\$1,000 each to 6,600 employees. The chief financial officer of Rush Enterprises talked about the additional savings the company would incur as a result of the reduction in its tax rate, which fell from 35 percent to 21 percent. He said:

You've got a choice. We could've kept it and stuffed it in the company bank account or coffers, or we can share it with the people. We chose to share it with the people because it's the right thing to do.

Well, I couldn't be prouder of that demonstration of the great Texas spirit—employers paying it forward.

This gentleman went on to say that his company believes tax reform will be beneficial not only for his office and his employees but also for his community and for overall economic growth. To him, it is about the bigger picture.

New Braunfels, though, isn't the only place where companies are paying it forward. A telecom giant, AT&T, headquartered in Dallas, TX, and two prominent airlines—American Airlines and Southwest Airlines—have responded in similar fashion, offering large bonuses to hundreds of thousands of their employees and promising to make significant capital investments in the future and update their fleet of aircraft—all with the savings they will incur as a result of this Tax Cuts and Jobs Act.

Meanwhile, a restaurant company that owns a chain of popular steakhouses in Texas and elsewhere has announced it will use its savings from lower rates—about \$70 million—to improve customer service and to provide additional benefits to its employees. The restaurants will be spending a significant amount of money to make sure the dining experience is more worthwhile, hopefully providing not only jobs to the people who prepare the food but those who serve it and the vendors who sell it. Not only will this legislation have the effect of improving a waiter's and waitress' salary, but I think this demonstrates once again how the impact of tax reform is far-reaching, perhaps in ways we really didn't necessarily think about. But this is what happens when people get to keep more of the money they earn. They spend it in a way that improves their quality of life and improves their economic security.

In Texas, our economy hopefully will continue its steady ascent. In its annual economic freedom index, an organization called the Fraser Institute just ranked Texas as No. 2 in the country. I am not too happy about that. We don't like being No. 2 in anything. But we have been in the top five of this list for 11 straight years, and it has been because of our lower taxes, our fiscally conservative approach to spending, and our commonsense approach to regulation that makes it easier for investors and entrepreneurs to succeed. When they succeed, that means more jobs are created and people can do the work that provides them the means to support their family and improve their quality of life. We call that the Texas model. Although it is not particularly unique, you would think it would be common sense. But as they say, here in Washington, DC, common sense is not all that common.

Nationally, the situation is looking up, too, in part because the Trump administration shares this Texas approach. The U.S. economy added 2 million jobs in 2017, and unemployment is at a 17-year low. Consumer confidence is at an alltime high since it was first recorded—I believe it was about 16 years ago. Over the last two quarters, the economy has grown by more than 3 percent. That is up from roughly 1.9 percent during the previous administration. People are excited to see the economy continue to improve in 2018 thanks to tax cuts and other regulatory reform and a government that is no longer hostile to private business and job creation.

I am glad to hear how many positive steps have been taken over the past few weeks in response to tax reform, but it is early. As I pointed out, it has only been a couple of weeks. I look forward to hearing many more such stories in the days ahead.

I intend to spend this next year, when I travel around the State of Texas, looking for the small businesses and individuals who benefit from this

important piece of historic legislation. I look forward to coming back to the floor of the Senate to continue to share the stories of this success. Letting people keep more of what they earn, having more take-home pay, improving their standard of living, and making the United States more competitive in the global economy—rather than seeing businesses and investment move overseas, let's see that come back home, which I think we will see in droves, and the American people will be better off for it.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

#### CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

#### EXECUTIVE SESSION

##### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of William L. Campbell, Jr., of Tennessee, to be United States District Judge for the Middle District of Tennessee.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. DAINES). Without objection, it is so ordered.

##### STOP ENABLING SEX TRAFFICKERS ACT

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, every day in America—the greatest Nation in the history of the world—children, young women, and teenagers are sold for sex. That is not a proud fact about America, but it is the stark reality. Every day in America, young women, children, and teenagers are trafficked, in large part because they are advertised now on the internet, in the open, visibly, and obviously. Even though code words may be used and sometimes doctored photographs, they are sold for sex because the traffickers are able to do so using the internet. We are here to stop it. We are here today to stop the trafficking and, most importantly, to stop the advertising.

In support of a measure, known as the Stop Enabling Sex Traffickers Act, SESTA, we have a strong bipartisan coalition. This bill is about as bipartisan as any bill is. I have worked on this legislation together with my colleague and friend, Senator ROB PORTMAN of Ohio, from the very begin-

ning. We have been joined in this effort by two Democrats and two Republicans—Senators MCCASKILL, HEITKAMP, CORNYN, and MCCAIN. We are passionate about this effort, and so are our colleagues who have joined us, because it is about those victims—those children, teenagers, and young women—who are sold for sex, who are trafficked on the internet. We want to give those victims a voice and a day in court, a right of action, a defense against this absolutely heinous, atrocious, inhumane crime. It is a crime and it can be prosecuted, but the victims deserve a day in court and a voice as well. That is the fundamental, core purpose of this legislation. It is about the victims.

We have been joined in this effort by advocates for those victims—sex trafficking survivors themselves and a diligent, bipartisan coalition of colleagues. In fact, more than 60 of our colleagues have joined this as cosponsors. We are now at a critical milestone for this bill. We have reached a point of momentum that makes this bill unstoppable if those survivors are to be heard and heeded, and I urge my colleagues to do exactly that. SESTA is really the product of stakeholder consensus. It has the support of every major human trafficking organization, of law enforcement, and of all of the major tech companies.

In essence, SESTA would clarify that section 230 of the Communications Decency Act was never intended to protect websites that facilitate sex trafficking, and it would ensure that those survivors get their day in court. It stands in stark contrast to a measure in the House of Representatives that has been approved by the relevant committee there, which would fail in that effort. Websites that knowingly facilitate sex trafficking should be afforded no protection under the Communications Decency Act. They should be given no harbor or implicit approval, which is what the legislation now does. The House bill, unfortunately, would fail to give those survivors and victims their day in court and the voice that they so desperately need.

Senator PORTMAN and I—and I am proud to be joined with him today on the floor—have championed this cause as a result of what we have seen and heard. In fact, in going back almost a decade, when I was attorney general for the State of Connecticut, I saw firsthand the way that websites can knowingly facilitate sex trafficking. I saw firsthand how challenging it was for law enforcement to develop cases against sex traffickers and employ anti-trafficking laws given the constraints on their resources, especially when those sex traffickers were able to use the internet to reach their customers. My experience in combating sex trafficking as attorney general at the State level led me, in my working with Senator PORTMAN, to co-launch and co-chair the Senate Caucus to End Human Trafficking so as to help find

solutions to this problem and others around the world whereby children and teenagers and others are sex-trafficked and victimized.

As the State attorney general, I concluded that facilitating sex trafficking must face repercussions. I was joined by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, which reported and has since reported the numbers. For example, there has been an 846-percent increase in reports of suspected child sex trafficking from 2010 to 2015—a spike it found to be “directly correlated to the increased use of the internet to sell children for sex.” We have heard of some of those instances, of some of the histories and the stories of these young people.

In 2012, a 15-year-old girl ran away from home. Over the next 2 years, pimps trafficked her for sex through these ads. As a result, she was raped over 1,000 times while she was moved from one site to another with the aid of the internet. In 2010, another 15-year-old girl ran away from a residential program. A pimp began to traffic her for sex by posting online ads. As a result, she was raped 900 times over the next 2 years.

These two young women and a third mustered the courage to tell their stories and to bring a lawsuit against backpage.com, which is the website that has profited most prominently from these online ads. These advertisements graphically emphasized the survivors' and victims' youth and other characteristics in trafficking them for sex. Yet the courts, understandably and perhaps rightly, have held that backpage.com and these internet sites generally have no legal responsibility. The First Circuit Court of Appeals found that backpage.com was immune from civil liability because of section 230 of the Communications Decency Act.

Websites that facilitate sex trafficking unconscionably and intolerably are now immune from legal action by survivors. That is unacceptable in America. No matter how terrible the harm they cause, no matter how horrific the consequences to these young people, they are protected by a shield from moral and legal responsibility. In a sense, these women were victimized as much by backpage.com and the internet as they were by the pimps who more directly sold them.

Senator PORTMAN and I, through SESTA, would implement three key reforms: No. 1, allow victims of sex trafficking to seek justice against websites that knowingly facilitate their victimization; No. 2, clarify that it is illegal to knowingly facilitate a violation of the Federal sex trafficking laws; and No. 3, enable State law enforcement officials, not just the Federal Department of Justice, to take action against individuals or businesses that violate Federal sex trafficking laws.

If websites are not knowingly facilitating sex trafficking, they should have nothing to fear from the law. If